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The Giving of the Name and Puberty

The giving of the name is done when the boy or little girl begins to understand and articulate words, so that by repetition it may be impressed on their memory and they may know what their name is. Generally, grandmothers in the case of girls and grandfathers in the case of boys have the privilege of giving the name, and they do this by noting some physical peculiarity of the little boys and girls, such as Tesapona, pretty eyes, Saanti, white eyes, Cuñanti, white woman. But sometimes no peculiarity is noted, and they baptize them with the name of parts of the body of animals, such as Yaguacupe, jaguar spine, Tatunai, armadillo tooth, Yaguaracu, jaguar fever. Generally, women's names end in Iru, that is, vessel or receptacle. Thus, for the Chiriguano a woman is something born and destined to serve him as he thinks best (2).

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2. Only Catholicism, brought by the Redeemer and preached by the apostles, reinstates woman; where it has not penetrated, she remains a slave, as in Africa and in other places on the globe.

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For children of both sexes a critical period approaches, the period of puberty, which in many is precocious and which normally occurs at the age of 11 or 12. The life or death of the Chiriguano, his future well-being or misfortunes, depend on this critical period. If all the prescriptions engraved on the minds of the family fathers are observed by those who reach that age, all the rest of their lives will be a delight, and, if not, every kind of calamity will overcome them.

When the maiden shows the first symptoms of puberty, Yimundía, her parents make her rest for a few days until what many out of modesty call sickness, Mbaerasi, goes away. Then she is put in a hammock or something similar, and, lying down on it like a body without a soul, she is

6: Nordenskiöld--60 E-5 (1908-1909) 1912 SF10 Chiriguano SF10
Chané SF8
Gua Rayu SF8

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says it is probably known to all Brazilian tribes. On the other hand, the custom of the couvade seems to be unknown to the Quichua /Quechua/ and Aymara, that is to say, to the mountain culture in Bolivia and Peru. This is one of the many contrasts between the Indians of the mountains and of the virgin forest.

The Güarayú Indians of northeastern Bolivia told me that if a man goes hunting immediately after his wife's confinement and, for example, shoots a parrot, he might kill his child. That is, during the first days of life the soul of the child follows the father.

Illegitimate children are very rarely born among the Chané and Chiriguano. I believe, perhaps I am mistaken, that the women of these Indians are chaste before they marry. On the Río Itiyuro, among about 500 Chané, there was only one child born to an unmarried woman. Deformed children are very rarely born. Thus, from what I saw and what Batirayu said, in the entire Parapiti Valley, among 1500-2,000 Chané, there is no one who was born blind, none cross-eyed, no idiot, and only one with deformed extremities, and four deaf mutes. I did not observe any Indians with a serious stutter.

I do not know whether among these Indians, too, deformed children are immediately killed, but this is probably the case. Nor do I know whether abortion occurs. It is certain, however, that these healthy women seldom bear children who are not well formed. Nevertheless, in the Parapiti valley, as was said, there was a boy with deformed extremities. One hip bone was too short and one arm was also crippled. This boy was treated by all with extraordinary kindness, /208/ and loud approval was expressed when I gave him a few small presents.

When the child begins to walk, it is given a name. This is not given by the father or mother, but by its grandparents. Among the Chané on the Río Parapiti I wrote down a few names. If it is a boy, he is called, for example, yatúrembi (lip of the tick), huñucaca (guanaco), tãunambi (armadillo ear), yánducúpe (ostrich back), vacainyãca (cow head), aguárachivi (fox urine), derêsa paravête (your poor eyes); if it is a girl, for example, ãrataypoti (guava blossom) (1). A great many of the names are

1. Psidium guayava.